The Local Kids

All has changed yet everything remains the same. Several shocks have reverberated through society over the last years and changed our reality profoundly. At the same time, the monotony of daily life continues to impose itself relentlessly. Whether this observation is frightening or comforting speaks volumes about one's perspective or mood.

Rather than confront the existential anxiety that this destructive society engenders, we might be tempted to carry on, as much as we can, as if nothing is happening. As the virulence of the Covid-19 virus and the states' measures have tempered down, many seem keen to move on. Not everyone though. Some might consider it pesky but the question of *proximity* during those periods of lockdowns and curfews is still pertinent. Fear and repression made it impossible to meet each other, paralysing not only social struggles but social life itself. During the pandemic, the state made abundant use of (scientific) experts and the media to lay claim to *rationality*. Everything that diverged from the dominant discourse was labelled as irrational and quashed. Following suit with these binaries is to enter a game which is not ours to play and in which we have nothing to gain.

The initial shock of a new war in Europe has provoked the tired argument that an exceptional event merits an exceptional response. Nevertheless, many before us have been confronted with unprecedented events and have found their *anarchist position*. *Anti-patriotism* isn't an unrealistic position: the discussion of taking sides between warring states is deceitful even in its most pragmatic form. War doesn't turn authoritarians into humanitarians. On the contrary, strategic calculations become more ruthless. A victorious state will not be generous to anti-authoritarians even if they temporarily ally themselves with the armed forces. On the contrary, the state thrives and is emboldened by patriotic fervour. We should refuse the blackmail of kill or be killed but that doesn't mean that we should march with the opportunists who now claim *pacifism*. Although the world doesn't come back as it was before, anarchists do not start from nothing in finding our way through the perennial challenges of our days. Our *hearts* still beat for direct actions against war mobilization because there's nothing liberating in being soldiers and fighting their wars.

Take care and *greetings* to everyone out there taking advantage of the *interruptions*!

Idolizing Rationality

These reflections attempt to question certain categories of thought that we generally use to describe the different modalities through which individuals relate to reality and face the fundamental questions of their existence – the diversity of interpretations of the world. It seems to me that these categories often work as moral or ideological brakes or motors on our senses and faculties compared to the experiential complexity of the world and our potential to interact with it. The a priori conceptual interpretations, which come from dominant culture, greatly influence our acting and the decisive choices of our lives, including in struggles against domination. This is why they have to be constantly re-examined.

Rationalism is one way to interpret the world. Born in the modern West and now its dominant ideology, it goes hand in hand with a humanist conception that places human beings at the top of the pyramid of the living beings on this planet. Their self-declared superiority is gained thanks to their intellectual faculties. These are understood in a highly logical, technical, mathematical way, and they produce concepts, logical connections, and abstract ideas which stake a claim on truth and objectivity.

Rationalism is the expression of the old rational-irrational duo. This pair is often expressed in other terms that here I'll limit myself to list – with no pretence to exhaustiveness – as their exploration would merit many more pages. On one side is reason, intellect, logic, science, matter and mind, and on the other feeling, emotion, instinct, will, passion, imagination, spirit and body.

Rationalism is the belief that human reason is the superior and preferred instrument of knowledge, and that this reason can be the base of all understanding in order to reach moral goodness, justice, and happiness. "Logical" explanations were developed throughout the history of human thought to underpin adhesion to certain moral values over others – to demonstrate the existence or not of God, the causes of natural phenomenons, the necessity of a certain political and social organisation over another etc. Concepts specific to logic – like *cause, effect, hypothesis, explication, demonstration* – strongly determined the rationalist approach in understanding of the world. But before modern times, it was a common opinion that reason alone wasn't sufficient to reach whichever *truth*, but it needed to be accompanied by other faculties, such as intuition.

Sciences, such as mathematics, astronomy, geometry, mechanics, physics, and in general the methods of scientific research, were always seen as a fundamental element of the rationalist approach, which sees reality as being governed by a series of laws and principles that can be known through human reason. In modern times, reason was increasingly seen as an autonomous and self-sufficient faculty, and becoming the only valid method to escape any kind of religious or irrational superstition and to arrive at the *truth* about the world. In Western countries the rationalist myth was pushed to the fore by the emergence of modern science, industrialism and capitalism. Its peak can be estimated between the 18th and 19th century with the Enlightenment and positivism.
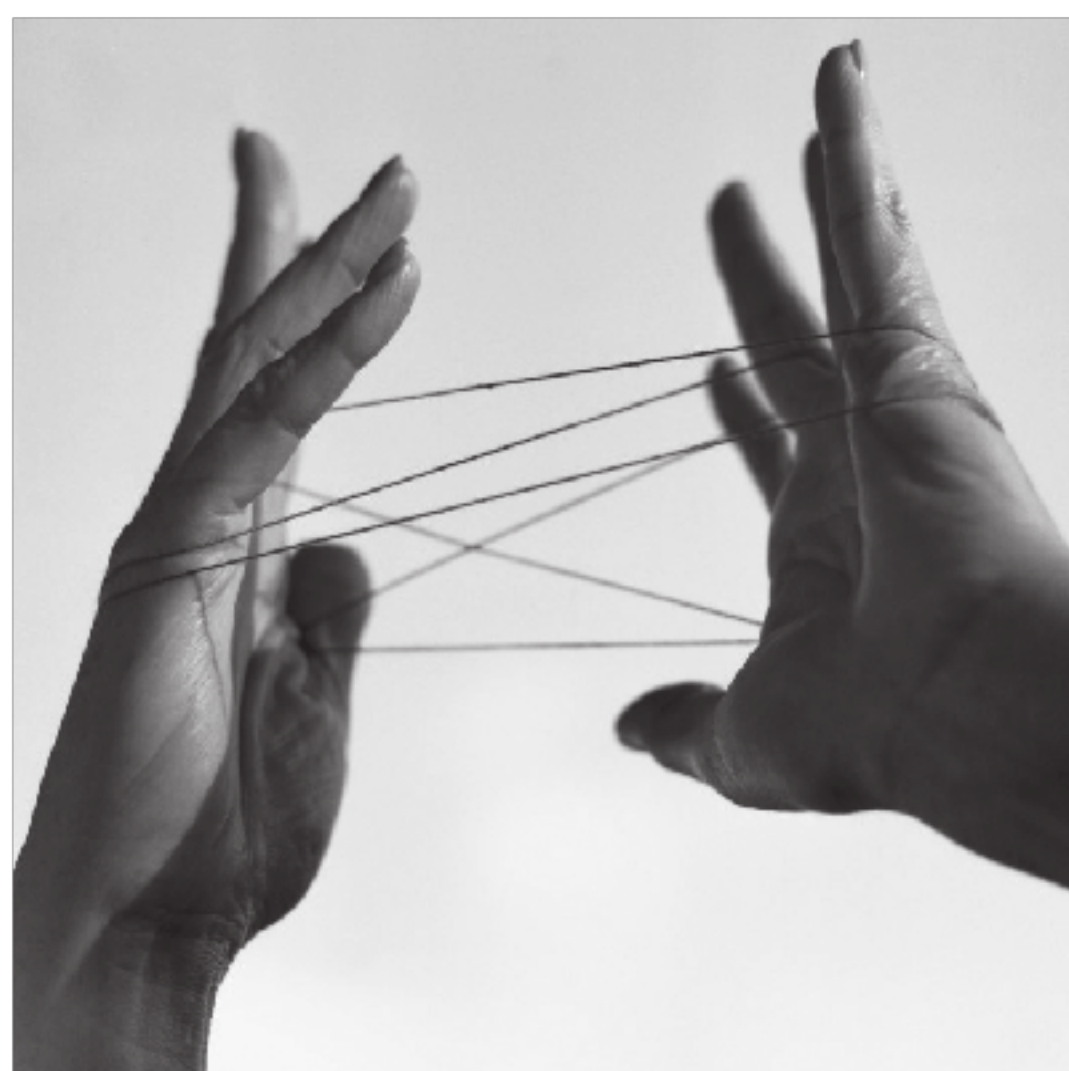
In the second half of the 19th century, it underwent a period of retreat, coinciding with the crisis of the bourgeoisie. This ran parallel to the emerging artistic, cultural, and philosophical movements which expressed a distrust toward positivism and the rationalist approach of life. Its cold and detached logic was seen as incapable of giving satisfactory answers to questions, desires, and fundamental needs, particularly concerning the internal realm of humans. Trust in scientific progress became the object of critique along with a revaluation of esoteric and occult spiritual doctrines. Anti-positivist philosophies multiplied along with those rejecting Hegelian idealism, preferring instead those with an irrational and spiritual character, although with significant differences among them: from Kierkegaard's existentialism to Schopenhauer's mysticism, from Nietzsche's vitalism to Bergson's intuitionism. Diverse artistic movements like romanticism, symbolism, and Art Nouveau rediscovered and valorized the most profound impulses of the soul, intuition, mystery, creativity, sexuality, and feelings as instruments of knowledge and exploration of different facets of reality.

After a serious decline, scientific authority today enjoys a strong social legitimacy and its power coincides more

and more with state and economic power. Rationalism, as the dominant ideology of advanced capitalist societies, even manages to coincide with scientism. Its instruments are the distinctions, definitions, deductions, and classifications of everything that moves on earth, including our own bodies and thoughts – as a consequence, after a period of "scientific" study, they are susceptible to being monetized and/or ruled, managed, domesticated.

Scientific progress as well as the state and the economic system need to gain social recognition to survive. They do this not so much through force but mostly by virtue of being seen as valid organisational forms and in conformity with reason (*rational*, logic, ordered, founded on scientific bases). The majority of people are convinced that this system of domination is *reasonable*. But doesn't this show, as the other side of the coin, its totally *counter-intuitive* character? Does the process of reason that leads to the conclusion that the system is rationally correct really pass through each and every individual that is part of it and condones it? Or is it simply ignored because its conclusion has been naturalised? What influence does the myth of reason have in the mindset of those that critique, at least in part, this system?

Maybe it's necessary to take a step back and to explain what we mean by rational and irrational. Rationality is the faculty that connects concepts and builds from this base a morality that enables one to judge one's actions and those of others according to criteria that are considered "objective" (the distinction between true and false, right and wrong, good and bad, etc.) Reason is designated to dominate passions, instincts, impulses, gut reactions, irresistible desires, fervent imagination, ardent feelings, creative thoughts and the cruel, senseless, amazing and elusive chaos which is a fundamental element of existence. Of course rage and rebellion are also part of this range of feelings and impulses that reason, according to commonly held opinion, is required to keep under control in favour of more reasonable and moderate approaches. It seems obvious how this log-

ic is extremely functional to power, as it recuperates any feeling of revenge that could grow from feelings of injustice, channelling it into the orderly forms of a reformist political dissent.

Rationality exists in relation to values that change over time. Dominant values express the collectively accepted dogmas of a given society, historically determined in its relation to the prevailing form of power and its accompanying ideology. These values aren't eternal but tend to periodically descend into dogma, pass through social and cultural upheavals, are put into question and finally are replaced by other values (although not necessarily new ones). Individuals who don't conform to the collectively accepted values of a given historical moment in a certain geographical context will be singled out as crazy, irrational, and subversive. The relation between rational and irrational looks more like a polarity than a dichotomy. What today is irrational can also be the prefiguration of the rational of tomorrow, or it can be the expression of a societal question for which there isn't yet a fitting answer. Or, on the contrary, what seems totally rational today could be considered madness and a form of collective hallucination tomorrow.

Rationality or irrationality is assigned to a certain interpretation of the world and to those that foster it using the criteria of adherence or non-adherence to the shared values of the community and necessarily involves potential access, or lack thereof, to power and social privilege. The discourses that merit the access to public discourse, those shared by elites and thus the majority of society, are rational. On the other hand, everything that impedes the linearity of this mechanism of correspondence is irrational. In a democracy, several rational discourses can exist together. Historically, when elites appropriated the discourse that best corresponded to it in that historical phase and designated it as the only rationally possible one, the rule over discourse became an absolute instrument of power and a means of exclusion and censorship. What followed was a split between power and community. This split didn't necessarily favour power because many people, excluded from the possibility to freely express their divergences with the dominant world, began to organise themselves clandestinely in sects, secret societies, heretic religious orders, etc. These often became the breeding ground for conspiracies against the established order.

The tendency toward closure into a single discourse and thus the tendency to produce dogmas, is a prevailing characteristic of the rationalist approach to the world as it implies that there is only one truth about the world and that it is objective. If the unveiling of this objective truth is not yet complete, then this allows for the temporary coexistence of slightly discordant interpretations. However, rationalism considers it to be only a question of time before an exact interpretation emerges. At this point it will assert itself as the absolute

truth and can no longer tolerate any objection. Even if its most sincere fans admit that it's always a partial kind of understanding, open to reformulation and liable to errors (due to the experimental method that it relies on), modern science actually presents us with a series of interpretations as *truths*, as *objective* facts.

What we consider more or less rational depends on historically determined factors. Rational is neither objective nor universal but variable according to time and space (as I will show with some examples) and thus the very meaning of this conceptual category completely implodes. What is considered rational in a given context *isn't necessarily more true or real* than what is not considered as such. Far from being abstract philosophical speculations, the deconstruction of the rationalist myth has profound implications on the assumed validity of a whole series of ideologies that have shaken human history, with unimaginable consequences.

Totalitarian regimes that we consider today as "irrational" garnered in their time a social consensus based on mythologies, utopias, and superstitions that many people considered perfectly logic and rational, if not perfectly objective. The belief that race was something objective and that certain characteristics determined the superiority of certain groups of individuals was more based on scientific and historiographic explanations (that today prove to be unfounded and that we consider to be motivated by "irrational" impulses) than on spiritual ones. Nazism relied simultaneously on suggestion, symbology, rituals, tradition, and the imaginary that were esoteric and idealist. It portrayed itself as a doctrine that glorified the spiritual values and interests of the people in opposition to bourgeois liberalism and utilitarian materialism characteristic of modern times. These ideologies that we find today crazy, absurd, and irrational gave birth in their time to totalitarian machines that were perfectly materialist, technicised, rationalised, and dedicated to genocide.

Marxism asserts that human history is subject to laws of development (the notorious "dialectical" movement of history) that would inevitably lead to the downfall of capitalism and to the emancipation of the exploited working class. According to this view, history tends naturally towards communism. At this moment I think that, aside from some nostalgics, there are few people who still believe in the inevitability of this historical path. Nevertheless this view of the world, this political philosophy, which we can today consider as almost a kind of religious eschatology, portrayed itself as materialist, rational, even "scientific". It mobilized millions of exploited people and aspiring members of the new ruling class all over the world.

I have already mentioned that different artistic movements started from a refusal of rationalism. They breathed life into the most imaginative and unexplored expressions of the human psyche and of artistic creation, as well as its most esoteric, unforeseen aspects, outside of logic and schemas. Movements like surrealism and dadaism expressed in different ways a tendency to exalt the most "irrational" characteristics of existence, often being accompanied by the expression of libertarian ideas. In Italy, a movement such as futurism went in the opposite direction. This artistic avant-garde promoted the primacy of emotion over reason, of novelty over tradition, of action and dynamism over intellectualism, of experimentation over logic, of irrationality over politics, and embodied a revolt against positivist, liberal, and bourgeois values... but its irrationalism descended quickly into a support of militarism and nationalism, of misogyny, and of the praise of mechanical, frenzied, and technological modernity. Rationality and irrationality became mingled, the words lost their meaning. The refusal of reason that was the starting point of this movement became confused with praise of techno-scientific rationality and of its machines, to which mystical aspects are attached. These machines seemed almost magical, as if endowed with their own life and soul.

Because we assess what is more or less rational based on the dominant values, everything that is consistent with the values of capitalism, the state and techno-science can now label itself as such. For science the irrational is what can't be an object of study or what can't be foreseen based on scientific models which assume a certain determinism, namely that starting from certain premises one can determine a certain behaviour. Something that is totally different from past interpretations. For Heraclitus, for example, nothing could be spoken of as "irrational" because at the very moment "one says" something, this "saying" enters in a discourse of relations and nodes – these nodes necessarily express a rationality because pure irrationality implies the absence of any node that links the irrational event to something else.

Today the new idol is Science (with its armed wing: technique) and scientific rationalism is the new slave morality to which the majority submits with veneration. The modern human is expected to escape from widespread misery into the consumption of commodities, first and foremost technological, and into the lofty aspirations of science, which promises to expiate the world's evils through its production of truth. This is not so different from the paradise promised by theologians with their illusions of an other-worldly redemption. Promises that are propagated by the same institutions responsible for the poverty and destruction (spiritual and material) from which they are supposed to save us.

But scientific interpretation is only one of the possible interpretations of reality, and one that provides inferior results compared to other views. It actually translates to a suspension of will, as what it claims to produce are not

interpretations but indisputable truths about the phenomena that we observe and in which we participate, along with objective laws to which we are expected to bow. In reality, all knowledge is a human construction, a subjective interpretation and not the unveiling of some essential and hidden truth. Science produces concepts, and functions in their accordance, building its own truth. Let's consider the definitions of species, these categories of human origin that only refer to themselves. They don't say anything real in and of themselves and only make sense inside our conceptual framework. Many human constructions don't grasp anything "essential" in an object. Its "truth" only relies on what we want to consider as true, often with the reinforcement of habit that naturalises the oldest or the most functional concepts for the society in which they exist.

Today all the discourses that contradict those of the scientific authorities are labeled as irrational, crazy, superstitious, ignorant, misanthropic, paranoid, or reactionary. The psychiatric ward and prison are always hanging over the heads of those who venture into the lucid madness of their dreams rather than adapting to dominant logic and becoming a voluntary cog in the social order. Capitalist values of rationality, utilitarianism, efficiency, and quantity are set up as objections to any idea or interpretation of reality that deviates from the dominant one. We tend to respond by putting ourselves on the same terrain, by aligning with the same values and claiming them as our own ("No, it's *our* discourse that's rational, useful, efficient, attracting people, producing results", etc.), and in doing so, we won't get out of it. Why not instead answer by dismantling the myth of rationality through demonstrating its historically-situated nature, one that is not universal but subjective and partial?

Rationalism is without a doubt the dominant ideology of modern times, the prevailing world vision in capitalist industrial societies. Ideologies that consolidate in a dominant position always pass first through a phase of naturalisation and similarly, rationalism was at first one interpretation among others, before it became the only interpretation possible and its historically determined and subjective nature became obscured. What happened before to the spiritual beliefs that dominated in the West during a certain period (and are still prevailing in certain parts of the world), happens now to the rationalist and scientific view in those same societies. Today, we tend to think that the dominant rationality isn't a kind of belief or illusion but the fundamental and universal character of human nature which makes us distinct from other animal species and places us above the rest of the natural world. We believe that the concepts and interpretations produced by reason thanks to the observation of what surrounds us (as scientific concepts) are the revelation of some "truth".

Once certain values are naturalised (imposed by society), even the rationality of a judgement can become a prejudice: reasonable is what seems reasonable. What seems unreasonable is excluded because we presume it to be irrational. Nevertheless the irrational remerges in another form. Reason always looks for a solution in a coherent and logical manner. This can work for simple situations and problems but reason isn't sufficient for big, decisive questions. It's incapable of creating image, meaning, and depth. When the reasonable way becomes an obstacle – and it always will at a given moment – then the solution comes in a most unexpected way. The reality that we interpret is essentially non-linear, complex, and chaotic. This means that it can't be communicated with a logical or sequential language and that to be understood, it's necessary to use other faculties.

My aim isn't to propose a refusal of rationality as such, rather the refusal of the fictional separation between the different spheres of our existence. The skills we possess and though which we can relate to the complexity of the world are many and multiform. We're naturally equipped with these tools and none should be discarded a priori. Our domestication entails the separation and hierarchisation of the possible ways we have to understand reality and to relate to the world. Subsequently, all aspects of our personality that aren't functional to the dominant social order are liquidated. The refusal of the primacy of reason isn't the same as the refusal of reason. The latter comes in different forms and isn't necessarily liberating. Sometimes it takes on reactionary tones, at other times it ends up in new myths, dogmas, religious forms, in the uncritical praise of irrationality, without liberating itself of what it was criticizing. We stay stuck in a dualist model, in a schematic and Manichean view that wants one of the two poles to prevail in a worrisome reductionism. Conversely, it's more interesting to try to dismantle the myth of reason, its absolute primacy in modern times, and the fallacy of this polarity that complicates instead of simplifying.

The current forms of domination aim for a total capitulation of the individual in favour of their compliance to being a cog in the social machines. This machinery is directed by political, economic, and technical interests and its functioning relies on the combined activity of all members of society according to the division of roles. Collaboration with this social apparatus, imposed by exterior institutions and adapted to their interests, is presented as a logical and rational condition. In other words, the only sensible method of human cohabitation, in order to harmonise a social nature that supposedly is cannibalistic and conflictual. This illusion of the necessity of state power (and of science, technique, religion, etc.) which has lasted now for centuries with the complacency of the majority, reduces the whole of humanity to a mass of slaves at the service of a small number of ultra-privileged. Paradoxically, the majority of slaves aren't even totally conscious of their condition and espouse the values that protect the dominant caste (authority, legality, science, etc.)

The rationalist dogma shows all its absurdity in the myth of progress. This myth informs and justifies the entire course of human history throughout the last centuries. In spite of all evidence, very few people have started to question it. It is still a deeply held belief that specifically human rationality and technical skills are proof of human superiority over all other life forms, and that its application through techno-industrial development will necessarily lead to an improvement of our living conditions.

However, with a minimal in-depth look, the myth of progress reveals itself as anything but rational and logical. It doesn't pass the test of its own rationality. "Irrational" and against all evidence, the direction we are taking is nevertheless still considered absolutely "rational". Deforestation, desertification, extinction, pollution, climate change, colonialism, destruction of biodiversity, depletion of raw materials, industrial accidents, widespread misery, wars over resources and overpopulation are just some of the most obvious symptoms of the probable self-extinction and ecological collapse towards which this ghoulish techno-scientific progress leads.

What's logical about pitting humans against the entirety of ecosystems, instead of seeing humans as one of many elements that are a part of it – a concept that today is only linked to religious, superstitious, spiritualist, retrograde views? The excess of *logos* has become *hubris* and arrogance. It loses the beacon of reason, which it had put on a pedestal. What are movements such as transhumanism – which glorifies technological development until its ultimate consequence – if not new religious forms disguised as modern rationalism?

Just as anarchists in the past unmasked the lies of religious power (but by reaction they fell into a misplaced trust in scientific or technological progress) we should destroy the oppressive dogmas of our times that were initially portrayed as emancipatory toward previous evils. Christian morality (submissive, powerless, victimizing, enemy of vital passions and instincts, producer of compensations and illusions) isn't totally extinguished in the minds of people, although it is being replaced with an ultra materialist, utilitarian, and rationalist mentality that's just as servile. It's a mentality that tends towards petty personal interests but also towards a self-effacement that delegates the logical explanation of one's life to others. This leads to placing trust in a logical and rational truth provided by the exterior instead of creating one's own values and interpretations.

Thus, an important question we should ask ourselves: in what way does the rationalist myth influence anarchist theory and action? As has been said before, I see it in the primacy given to analyses that claim to be logical, materialist, and objective in relation to social relationships and political and economical dynamics (an inheritance from "scientific" marxism). I also see it in the many analyses about the question of the organisational method best suited to the struggle against domination, in the importance given to engaging the largest number of people (following the scientific method where what is quantifiable is what counts), in the drafting of "logical" political projectualities based on the study of "objective" data and on predictions for the long-term, in the utilitarian approach (of a capitalist nature) that comes forward in certain discourses about the engagement of other social "categories" and in certain strategies of struggle worked out beforehand – in short, in the attention given to "technical" aspects of revolt to the detriment of the more visceral ones... As if rebellion would be a question of logic, calculation, and prediction.

Pragmatism and materialism are values produced by modern industrial society. Not surprisingly they're also the pillars of a doctrine like marxism, which sees industrial capitalism as a fundamental historical precondition for humanity to reach a free society. Those who refuse these values are accused of a nostalgic romanticism towards the preindustrial "primitive". Yet part of our project of individual freedom should also include our emancipation from symbolic powers and from the lies that we tell ourselves to transform our aspirations into truths and dogmas to be applied to other people, who we tend to conceptualise as a class or a social group rather than individuals.

As a recent anarchist individualist brochure clearly pointed out, a kind of positivism can be found in certain anarchist pedagogical approaches. According to certain proposals, the libertarian education of the community or of children, the distribution of anarchist propaganda, or the spreading of old knowledge, lost skills, and different ways of relating would be the way to realize the anarchist project of liberation from a society of exploitation and authority. It shows an optimistic view of human history in which social progress would be ensured if people would have children in an anarchist way and would increase the pedagogical (libertarian) effort toward new generations.

The article "2+2=7" (translated from the first issue of the french anarchist paper *Sans Détour*, published in November 2018) [english translation published in The Local Kids, Issue 3] is a critique on the rationalist hegemony of thought and on the materialist or realist approach to our struggles, with an invitation to embrace the "irrational" and the anti-ideological in our life choices and rebellion. It warns against an anarchism that pretends to be sensible and objective, that believes in the linearity of history and of thought instead of the explosive mix of feeling and reasoning that pushes the individual to act. It shows how faith in reason isn't anything else than the continuation of religious faith in other forms, as both entail the need to believe in something to ward off the uncertain, the undefined, and the chaos that are fundamental elements of existence. Thus marxism and its faith in the revolution, which still influence the anarchist movement, have become a new messianism for the exploited.

In addition to joining forces with scientism – the ideology that wants to destroy everything in us that's unpredictable and passionate – dominant logic also makes us accept the conditions in which we live by portraying them as perfectly rational. Even the opposition does not deviate from this logic and thus cedes to the values of adaptation and gradualism – a logic that's embodied as much by progressives as conservatives. It's the realism of the small steps forward and of gradual change because more "objectively" attainable.

"Fighting against the dominant logic means tending toward an 'irrational refusal', *to oppose partial and gradual modification with total transformation*, through a destruction that chooses to annihilate rather than going in search of a cure for the incurable." Instead of "seeking meaning [for our lives] in a counter-logic", that intends to be liberating rather than oppressive, the proposal is to let ourselves be moved by "the magma of suggestions that life offers us" because revolt emerges from vitality, not logic.

For a full and rebellious life we need all the instruments at our disposal – our rage, our capacity for abstract elaborations, intuition, analyses, passion, doubt, craftiness, fear, evaluation, imagination, courage, logic... unreasonable outbursts as well as the capacity to plan and organise the pursuit of our aims, of being open to emotion and to thoughtful awareness in the unfolding of our conscious relationships and our projects with other people. Thus not a refusal of reason altogether but its necessary combination with other means of equal importance, with the required attention to avoid reproducing or erecting absolutisms, claims to truth, or old and new moralisms.

Proximity in Times of Epidemic ———

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Bill Gates' now famous "TED Talk" in 2015 has become, like other speeches of the tech tycoon, a real source of joy and suffering for all those who see the epidemic of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (or at least its management) as a real conspiracy of global capitalist oligarchies. Nevertheless, the talk deserves some reflections, if for no other reason than its undoubtedly prophetic character. In this talk, Gates predicted that the world population and economy would be brought to their knees by the spread of a respiratory flu. Moreover, he anticipated and "suggested" the use of the same tools that different governments are now implementing: from technological tracing of contacts and vaccines, to an increasingly close collaboration between the medical and military spheres. Already in 2005, during the outbreak of the bird flu, the World Health Organisation (whose current primary donor is the *Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation*) foresaw a scenario close to the current one. In a post from April 2020 (analysed by Bianca Bonavita in the recent text *Bill Gates e la nemesi tecno-medica*) Microsoft's former boss reaches a full-fledged dictation of the political-sanitary agenda to governments, this time putting at its top a radical "change of habits". If this wasn't enough, in 2019 the John Hopkins University organised an epidemic simulation – in cooperation with virologists and epidemiologists of course – funded by the Gates foundation and entitled "Event 201".

This kind of foresight is worrisome and should be received with consternation without indulging in the mechanical linearity of certain "conspiracy theories" (a term that contains different positions – some rather lucid and others totally delirious, but with a shared view which shifts the argument's focus from social relations to the manoeuvres of a caste of villains). Those who hold economic and political power unfortunately also control a big part of the "social brain", including a variety of paid experts who are as swift and able to anticipate dramatic scenarios as they are to work out solutions (and to present them as unquestionable). Given specific social conditions and the human and material instruments available to interpret them, it is not too difficult to predict these events nor to imagine their consequences.

From this point of view, Covid-19 is a *perfect storm*, heralded with the darkest clouds. The virus is *not deadly enough* to be ignored ("if we can't do anything, then we might as well continue living as before until there's a solution") but *deadly enough* and, above all, *contagious enough* to justify this state of emergency that we all, reluctantly, subjected to. Capitalism, through its ceaseless devastation (from deforestation and industrial farming to genetic engineering), its packed metropolises, its just-in-time production and last-minute travels from one side of the planet to the other, provokes and will increasingly provoke bacteria and viruses to jump between species and amplify the spread of diseases (as shown by the recent slaughter of 17 million caged minks infected by a variant of SARS-CoV-2). But above all, current social relations, with an increasingly exasperated profit logic, are unable to confront and contain this rather banal threat. By unexpectedly crashing on our society, the corona virus has revealed this in a number of aspects. In the background, following decades of consumer abundance, a different relation to pain and an immense fear of death emerged (even in the devastated context of the First World War, the Spanish flu – a much more deadly virus – did not provoke the securitarian fever we are experiencing in recent months). In
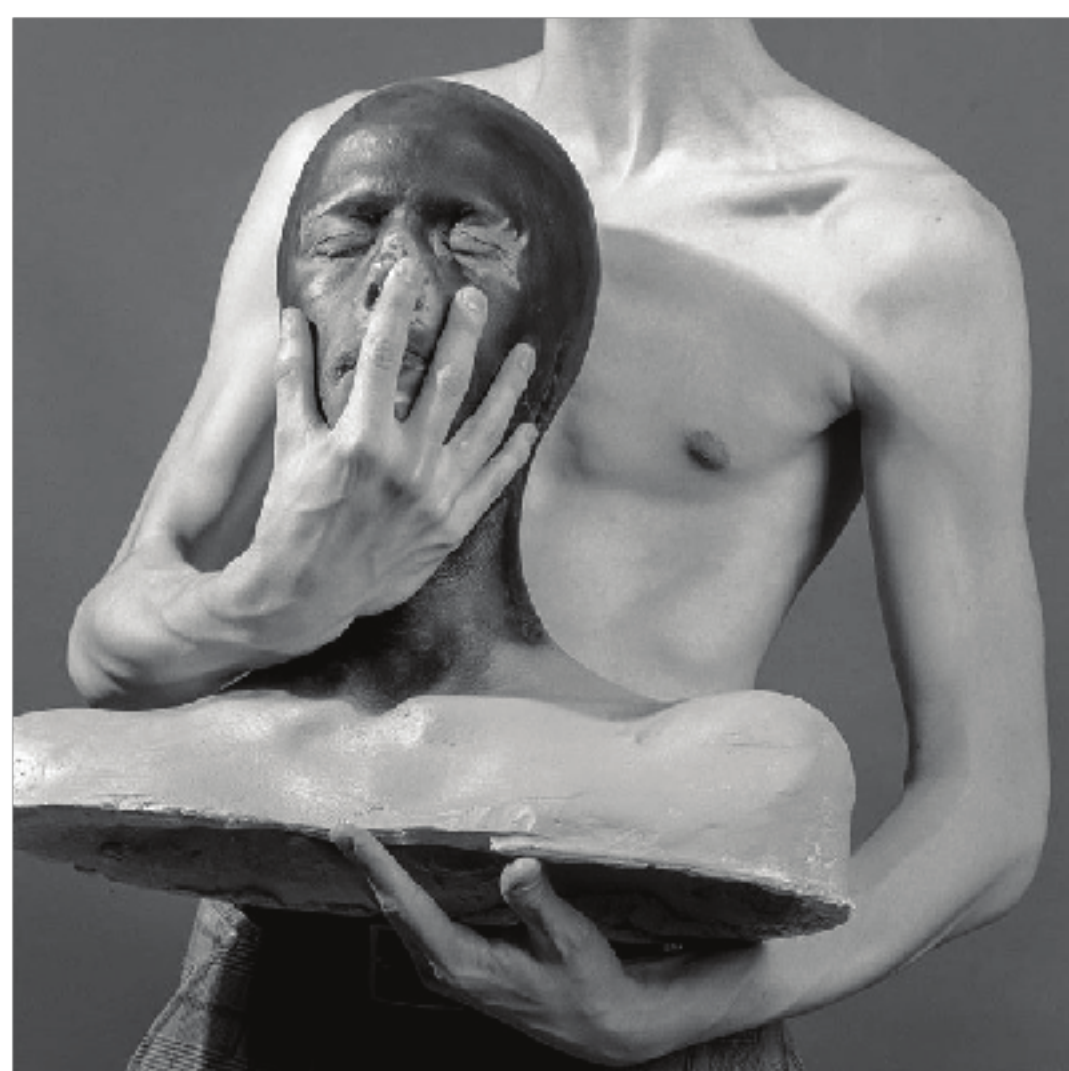
the foreground, what stands out is the inefficacy and the idiotic character of the health care system of half the world (and first and foremost in our old Europe – contrary to its past "prosperity"). The dismantling of outpatient and community health care in favour of private hospitals (Lombardy is an excellent example of this trend) prevented an adequate (and non-technological) tracing of infections and an equally adequate extinguishing of outbreaks, which local general practitioners would have managed much more effectively than whichever futuristic app. Healthcare budget cuts have also led to a dramatic shortage of machines for intensive and semi-intensive care and, more generally, of doctors and hospital beds. In Italy, the number of hospital beds went from 8 beds for every 100 people in the 90s to 3.1 today. Spain has a similar number, the UK has even fewer (2.5), and France has under 6. The only European country that still has 8 beds per 100 people is Germany, so it isn't a coincidence that faced with only slightly fewer Covid cases, there were less than a third of the deaths there than in Italy. Still not satisfied with this massacre, Confindustria [the lobby of bosses] is calling for extra cuts in the coming decades, in a document significantly entitled *Il coraggio del futuro, Italia 2030-2050* [The courage of the future, Italy 2030-2050]. These are the facts we have to face. What conclusions can we draw from them?

We are not in the position to judge in absolute terms capitalism's inefficiency (as that of another way of life remains for us a gamble on the unknown). Nevertheless, we have to understand the social dynamic that is brought to light by this inefficiency. We live in a world where the movement of profit ends up determining a technique's *real* inferior efficacy relative to its abstract potential. In other words, despite magnificent aims and progressive promises by capital to humanity (and letting the most "developed" and privileged components get a taste of it), we're dying of a flu, while there would exist – the conditional tense is required – the knowledge and techniques to tackle it. But these aren't implemented. This resembles – the comparison isn't ludicrous to me – how, in recent years, entire areas experienced heavy flooding after only a few days of rain. But, behind this, we find decades of excessive and neglectful land development and overbuilding. In other words, this system cannot even cope with a banal climatic event, while it develops increasingly sophisticated technologies and fills the pockets of increasingly fewer individuals.

Maybe what's true for specific projects of social engineering (as suggested by the infamous NATO Report 2020) is also true for the security and military state management of Covid. It isn't only the product of a dominant class that has every interest in solving each question with the heavy-weight of soldiers, it's also a social organisation that doesn't *know* how to act differently and a capitalism that's increasingly turned inward. At the beginning of the state of emergency, some clear-

headed people rightly declared that the whole weight of decades of health care cuts was being unloaded on the population *in the form* of a heavy militarisation and social policing. It's a weight that falls on us every time we're asked to show our ID cards, or when we fill in the umpteenth health declaration (in addition to the rage we feel when we end up in hospital with Covid, or when we get infected while there for another reason, or when an important medical appointment is postponed because hospital wards are on the brink of collapse). Firstly, it is useful to expose how the military management of the epidemic is a consequence of purely capitalist dynamics, as much as a political *choice* in line with them, then secondly to be prepared to intervene when conflicts arise from this. If doctors, nurses, or patients would start to self-organize to hold the Bosses accountable, for example, would we have radical proposals to make and with which to engage in these conflicts? What will we do and say if the students and teachers' protests against online education were to grow in intensity and scope? The absence or the weakness of these purely single-issue struggles (absolutely not subversive) show how much the exploited are cornered. To get out of this corner, the use of critical intelligence – if only the development of some *judgement of facts* – is the bare minimum. For example, the virus spreads mostly – if not mainly – inside crowded public transport. To limit infections, an increased number of buses and trains are more useful than more cops and soldiers. This is a banality that's nevertheless not said by *anyone*. Besides, not a single proposal is possible (neither theoretical nor practical, neither reformist nor radical) if we don't break *the propaganda of fear and the moral blackmail*. It paralyses the capacity to reason (even in subversive circles) and it blocks the possibility to protest. According to me, we have to start from there and push to sharpen reason and practices along the way.

Over the last months, they have hammered us with *collective responsibility*. This concept is used to legitimize a *military* measure like the curfew, to prevent gatherings ("social life" as well as protests) and whereby we should avoid kissing and hugging. It's the *ideological* pillar of a capitalism that wants us to pay – in financial terms, but above all, in terms of *reasons to live* – for the catastrophe that it provoked. In this way we're brought in line with capitalism's *own* "species jump": a world of digital *distancing* in which there is always a technological device between individuals and where face-to-face interaction is limited to the *necessary* extent (according to the needs of capital, of course). The current "lockdown of free time" is the symbol of a logic that requires us to risk our health for work, while prohibiting us to do what we want with the time that's not dedicated to the simple reproduction of daily life. In the name of profit, the state did not do everything it could to limit the epidemic. And everything that can be done to keep production going is transformed into an imperative. At the same time, there's no place left for the things that give pleasure and meaning to existence. Even those who have the money to afford non-productive time must settle for its *digital* surrogate.

This purely economical distinction between what is *necessary* and what is *expendable* has reached grotesque levels. As explicitly theorised by the brazen Conte [Italian prime minister from 2018 to 2021], this Christmas, consumption is encouraged while gatherings are forbidden. More and more people sense the deceit and express a certain discontent. In fact, in addition to clashes in different cities at the end of October, the minister of the interior Lamorgese counted close to 700 demonstrations from the beginning of the state of emergency. In general, this rage struggles to find its own ground and risks dissolving into a hodgepodge of heterogenous demands and exhausting itself in improvised flare-ups. Above all, it runs the risk of staying far removed from *touching upon* the real issues. It's a paradox that we are forced to face: those who grasp the scope of the current transformation are precisely those who interpret it in its most deformed way – certain "conspiracy theorists". While they understand the link between a technological leap and social control, they squeeze it into the framework of a toxic propaganda that's mainly acquired *from the internet*. They're increasingly organised – not coincidentally – by fascists. In case anyone hadn't noticed, next to supposedly "anti-mask" demonstrations or the QAnon movement, channels, websites and blogs are popping up like mushrooms. Here, a rather accurate and in-depth critique of the "5G world" can exist next to racist theories like the Kalegri Plan [a misrepresentation of the writings of the Austrian-Japanese Count of Coudenhove-Kalegri that "proves" immigration to Europe is planned by politicians and aimed at provoking a white genocide] or a hallucinatory praise of Trump portrayed as an "enemy of the system". When you think about it, this mix is a huge danger. In this historical moment, there's the risk that *a reactionary parody of revolution* (historically, this is fascism) is born *in the absence of a revolutionary movement*. Let's also take into account that the management of the epidemic (with its inseparable technological leap) hits or undermines exactly the small or medium-sized capitalists – "petit-bourgeois" to say it in the old-fashioned way – who have always been the fascist's class of choice. Simone Weil wrote in 1934 that "the middle classes are only attracted by revolution when it is conjured up for demagogic purposes by apprentice dictators". This is why it's important to understand the ongoing technological turning point, without giving in and excusing unprovable conspiracy theories (alternately blaming "the Chinese", "the Americans", "the French" and in the case of QAnon, hardly hidden between the lines, "the Jews"...) The only way to thwart these nightmarish scenarios (from the "Matrix" of capital to the birth of *a false fascist opposition*) is to go further and to aim at the heart of the problem, namely the relation between material needs and the tension towards freedom. There have been demonstrations since the
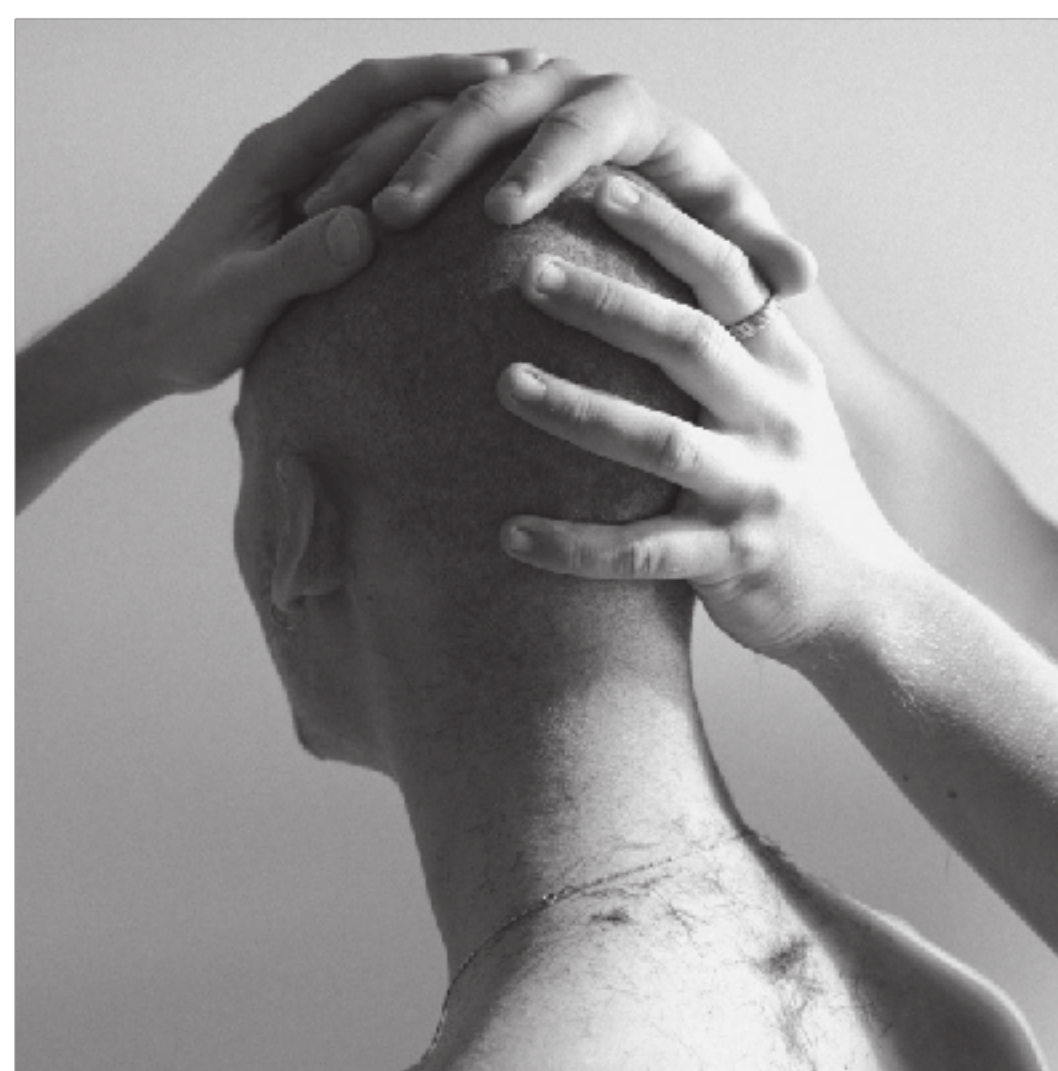
end of the "first lockdown" but rage only exploded when the "sanitary dictatorship" colluded with the materiality of reality. Naples revolted starting from a mobilisation of shopkeepers, *but it was hundreds of young proletarians who kicked off the clashes.* This shows us who takes the initiative as well as who makes a difference. If we want the initiative to come from our class, then we have to reestablish the link between needs and freedom *in our own way,* determining autonomously what to live for and for what to *risk* dying for. We can and *we have to* refuse to work when we risk getting infected, however unpleasant it is for the (small-time) boss who wants to stay open by risking the lives of others. We can and *we have to* take the streets if we don't want capital to write the script of our history. Beyond physical courage (always necessary to embody any tension towards change) we have to acquire intellectual and moral courage. What do we mean by that?

Since the beginning of the state of emergency, I was pleased to notice that among the comrades I spend time with – let's say "in our circles" – few things changed when it came to attitudes and daily behaviours. Despite the fear (more out of concern for others than oneself) we continued more or less as before to give kisses and hugs, to share bottles and joints (to say nothing of the right dose of allergy to controls and uniforms). For some, this might be a blind thoughtlessness; for me it's the instinctive refusal to renounce what makes us human and makes life worth living. We have to give reasons to this refusal, to clarify it and fill it with substance. We should know that we're not the only ones who feel it and that to express it doesn't necessarily mean to be a "denier" nor to avoid any precaution or consideration. We have to come up with a different understanding of responsibility and find a balance.

Let's start from the assumption that we have to meet and interact to survive, at least as long as we aren't reduced to "brains in jars" to say it with Orwell. Consequently, there isn't a precaution that can protect us and others *in absolute terms* from infection. On the other hand, any precaution we adopt corresponds with a specific renunciation whose impact may be more serious and important than we can imagine now. Let's look at the question of the mask. It has become the "symbol" of these times which has regularly split the "worried" and the "infuriated". All things considered, it's a banal sanitary protection that limits the viral load one comes into contact with and thus can be wisely used. However the mask is also (more than slightly) annoying in addition to being a sensory limitation. The simple fact of talking to each other and not seeing the face of the other *makes a difference.* Let's leave aside what it would mean to be consistent with its permanent use and to always keep distance and our faces covered when we're with people we appreciate and love, or the terrible obligation to use it outdoors (an obligation that's becoming permanent) with its social and police discipline. If out of fear of infec-

tion (I'm talking mainly about the fear to infect *others*), we reproduce uncritically certain restrictions (which are anyway impossible to follow to the letter), then these restrictions will have no limit. To be consistent, we would have to abandon struggles, seaside trips with friends, parties, love (*but also* work? public transport? school?). We have to assert our autonomy about *what* to do and moreover *how* to do it, or we'll be subjected to the state in our most intimate realms and, watch out, *for an indefinite time.* Let's be very aware of this last aspect: the element of time. The line of different governments is already that the emergency will last until 2022 and that we can only get out by more or less forced vaccinations (on this topic we have to equip ourselves with arguments, and fast). We won't escape unscathed from two years like this on a social or emotional level (according to Italy's Order of Psychologists, 7% of the population is now at risk of depression while the number of suicides has increased already). It's very likely that Covid is only a teaser for a "viral century". From the jump of diseases between species to the melting of glaciers (which emit viruses and bacterias buried since millennia) we'll be faced with thousands of unknown diseases (according to a study commissioned by the UN, they could amount to 900 000 over the coming years).

So what to do? Take no precautions and risk infecting those we love or those we don't know? Or to tell oneself with a good dose of cynicism that only the elderly or already sick people will die (which appears to be what the worst reactionaries say, from Trump and Johnson to different members of Lega Nord [far-right party in Italy])? I think that the only possible answer is the *beginning* of an answer from which we can really start thinking. Faced with such a complicated problem when we can't obtain anything without renouncing something else, *everyone has to draw their own line where they see fit, on the basis of reasoning.* Consequently, when we're together, we have to decide where to draw it according to a consensus-based approach. Obviously I can only make some hypotheses, given that the individuals di-

rectly involved make a difference. From my side, I'm not necessarily against the use of masks or of social distancing during indoor meetings when elderly people, those with health issues, or people who are just more worried express these demands. But why impose these restrictions when we're outdoors and when everyone can decide for themselves to get closer or to keep a distance? It's up to everyone to reproduce these considerations in similar situations. It goes without saying that this entails an individual effort to explain one's position – as others have to more or less know what my attitude is, what precautions I take or not – and to grasp and respect the position of others (nobody should feel obliged to justify their choices, for example about keeping a distance or wearing a mask. Evidently, we don't know who has certain health issues or not, who is in contact with elderly people or not, and so on; nobody should feel forced to explain their own business.) I'm very much aware that this can't limit infection in an absolute way, but *nothing* can. Why feel so "responsible" faced with the novel threat of Covid and not towards the lethality of more common behaviours? Just to mention one, the use of cars, which is the source of traffic accidents and environmental pollution, is maybe the first cause of death in the world. The respect of speed limits and alcohol levels can't *totally* shield us from becoming murderers. In spite of this, how many of us continue to use cars? And how many of us dream of deterring others from using them? But we can't do without them, they will say, "it's normality."

There we have it – normality. We have talked a lot about it lately. So let's take a closer look. I recently watched a television report about a protest in a restaurant. The owner refused to close shop and the customers refused to get up during a police operation. Finally, met with screaming and booing, the cops left, and the customers continued eating with the owner standing behind the register. Maybe I can imagine what went through his head (probably his income and survival for the most part) while I can't say what the customers thought – they could have been "deniers", subversives, frustrated or simply indifferent. But I had to smile. When one says that "we can't go back to normality because normality is the problem", we have to think about what we're saying. The "normality" of a restaurant is one of a capitalist business. But in this place there's also *another* normality that we've lived since the stone age, the one of eating side by side and being close. *Proximity* is the keystone of the entire situation. The national mobilisation of "andrà tutto bene" [everything will be alright], of "siamo tutti sulla stessa barca" [we're all in the same boat], of "distanti ma uniti" [distant but united] *connects* us in a submissive and controlled unity that at the same time isolates us, preventing us from addressing, side by side, a decline in living standards and from opposing the different plans of domination. It's not a coincidence that we see an acceleration of important capitalist projects (from the TAV [high speed train] to 5G) going

alongside a direct attack on all forms of social life (with many decrees that allow prefects to fence off and militarise whichever street or square according to their own whims). Who hasn't yet understood that all the measures to control the spread of the virus focus on gatherings without permits and without money? For small businesses (nevertheless heavily hit) "we'll find solutions" (promoting home deliveries or pushing people to adapt to new working hours) yet there's no mercy for those who meet in the streets. We have to fully comprehend the game that the state plays and start to unmask it. Starting from the notion that these controls didn't begin this year of course, they are simply radicalising. Contrary to the past, certain small interests are sacrificed that were previously protected, but this doesn't mean that "we're all in this together". Those who are really at the bottom will be hit even more fiercely. Obviously the counter-attack against this unprecedented capitalist assault can only start from places in which we will be socially close again. We shouldn't get bogged down by rules we didn't freely establish and take a good look at the *quality* of the agreements we make (agreements that are not a framework exterior to struggles but an immensely central issue). In all of this, the logic of *individual responsibility,* of mutual respect and free agreement can be the trail of crumbs that leads us out of the labyrinth. The logic of *collective responsibility* is exactly the labyrinth that they have build around us. Certain comrades might want to think hard before they preach, reproduce, or take the bait of this paranoid logic. On one side there's Covid, one of many tragedies (and far from the worst) provoked by capitalism that we can manage to live with (although evidently not very well). On the other side, there are the preparations for a life that's literally *unliveable*. The theft of our data, a transition to work directed by algorithms, the virtualisation of money, the permanent traceability and the *commodification* applied to every facet of existence (what Shoshana Zuboff summarises in the formula *surveillance capitalism*) are at one with a world where coming together becomes a criminal act.
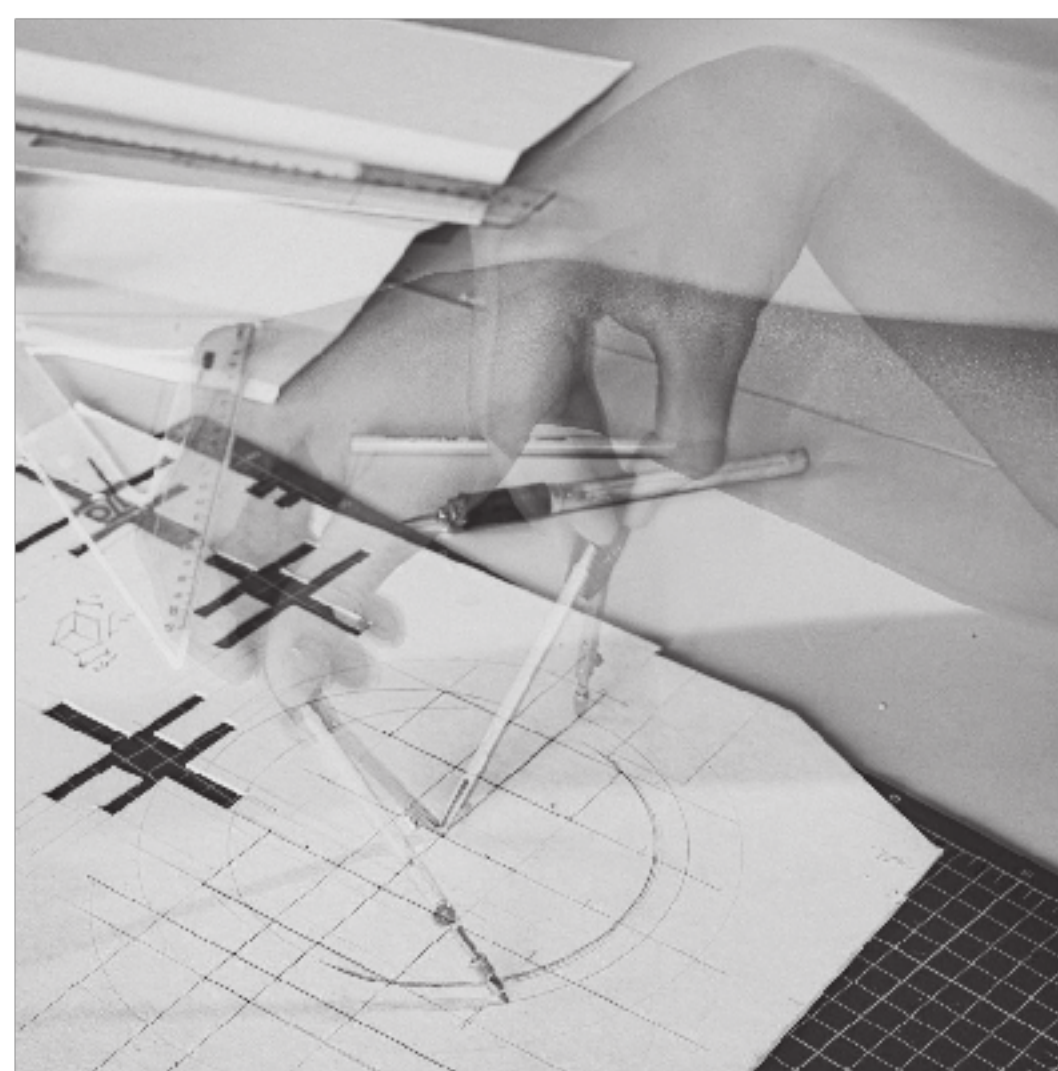
Let's look at how the spread of the virus is managed by the state and let's try to connect these things. Following the first total *lockdown*, governments are now pushing a model that concedes a bit more or a bit less freedom depending on the curve of infections. This model works like a pendulum clock, whose strokes sound alternately with *it's entirely your fault* when the infections rise, or with *it's thanks to the measures* when they decrease. How can we not see the ridiculousness in this? Do we really think that seeing each other before or after 10 pm will make a difference? My impression is that the epidemic has its cycles, like any other disease. The Spanish flu had three main waves (in spring and then in autumn of 1918 and again in the winter of 1919), which seem to correspond with those of today (the "third wave" is predicted by the so-called experts for February 2021). The outcome of this model is a leash that will be more or less extended depending on arbitrary estimations. Anything else depends and will depend on the balance of power (at the moment the latest decrees aren't followed to the letter and more restrictive decrees aren't applied because of the protests during the last months). To change and subvert this balance of power, it's necessary to defy the laws as well as to build ideas that accompany and strengthen this defiance. *To assert the ability to meet each other and to be together* will be an integral part of it. If we can build a discourse that rises to the height of the challenge, even the most playful and modest initiatives (like concerts and parties) will have an essential value in the war that's around the corner. This is even more true for the occupations of buildings (as an answer to rising cost of living and hunger, where we can organise ourselves, where we can *take care of each other*). Taking a space after or between days and nights of rage can be one hypothesis of intervention that can give continuity to these revolts and provide the occasion for others to *find their own reasons and the words to express them*. (I'm thinking about this young and multi-ethnic component that in certain cities – at least in Naples, Turin, and Florence – made a difference in the substance of the protests).

Let's go briefly back to the tables of that restaurant. I think the demand that brought together all these people (beyond their certainly different positions) is in fact the demand to *stay human* – or if one prefers, to *stay alive*. On the one hand this issue ignites the public squares in half the world, while on the other, it entails a confrontation with the fear of pain and death. Although it is without a doubt legitimate to defend oneself against these eternal plagues, we can't allow it to happen at the expense of that what makes life worth living. To live, we also have to risk suffering and dying. If not, we'll surely march in formation toward the abyss.

Günther Anders was right in asserting that to be a revolutionary in a world subject to the despotism of a perpetual technological change, one also has to be a bit *conservative*. Of course not by upholding more or less imagined and oppressive traditions, but toward those *elementary* and slightly animal impulses that differentiate us from *things*. Leaving these demands and urges in the hands of bogus prophets, ufologists, and fascists could be a tragic mistake. While a future of militarily managed catastrophes is being prepared, we should prepare to defend a part of what has always been and always will be, until they don't take it away, and from there build momentum towards our utopia.

Beginning of December 2020
D.G.

Anti-patriotism

Previously published as Antipatriotismus *in the incognito brochure* Soldaten-Brevier, *1907*

One often hears people with quite advanced ideas, even some socialists, declare that they would take up arms to defend the homeland if an attack by a reactionary power would threaten existing freedoms within the country.

However, they do not have the courage to arrive at the logical consequence of this thought – that they would not defend the German homeland against an invasion by France. A French victory, with the introduction of French institutions, would lead to greater liberties in the defeated German homeland, as was the case after the Napoleonic wars.

From the view of patriotism for political liberties, a freedom-loving German would therefore under no circumstances take up arms against France whether in offensive or defensive war.

Having reduced the unconditional patriotism of throne and homeland by half, let us reflect a little on whether the political liberties of the homeland really deserve to

be defended with the blood and lives of thousands of its sons against political oppression by a foreign, more reactionary power.

Let us leave aside the legitimate question of whether there is any country that is more unfree than Germany, or whether there are any freedoms at all in Germany or Austria that can be defended. Let us forget for a moment what cruel, merciless, feudal and class justice prevails in Prussian Germany, and how many thousands are buried every year behind prison walls for a plain word, for a leaflet, for strike violations, for insulting the monarchy. Let us suppose that Germany really has political liberties like France or Switzerland. Are these political liberties really worth so much that hundreds of thousands of proletarians should *sacrifice their lives for them* in a war?

It is not worth buying or maintaining some small alleviation from persecution and oppression with a hundred thousand proletarian corpses. History always and everywhere shows us that proletarians are harmed by every war – even more so after "victorious" ones than after "unfortunate" ones. The triumphant monarchy and capitalism, through victory against the external enemy, is also strengthened against the "internal" enemy – on the one hand, through the enthusiasm of a victorious patriotism and, on the other, through the haemorrhage of the youth who perish in the "victorious" battles. After such victories, reactionary forces become more arrogant and despotism becomes less restrained. All rulers know this and therefore always regard war as a convenient and desirable diversion of popular uproar toward the outside whenever it begins to simmer within the country.

On the other hand, we always see how periods of freer political development in the country begin precisely after lost wars: in Prussia after Jena in 1806, in France in 1871 in which defeat also got rid of the monarchy, and at present in Russia where the revolutionary movement is bolstered by the defeats in the Japanese war.

It is therefore in the interest of the proletariat that the "fatherland" is defeated.

But do political liberties alleviate the misery of the working class in the "freest" countries? Are not the gendarmerie, the police and the army mobilized, in defiance of all these political rights, every time the workers of even the "freest" state rouse themselves to gain better living conditions? Would it not be madness on the part of the workers to defend with their blood and their lives such liberties which mean only freedom or somewhat shorter prison sentences for ambitious journalists and orators?

No! If the proletariat is to put its blood and life on the line, then let it not be for worthless political liberties but only for its full freedom, which means prosperity for all.

If such a country would be attacked – one where freedom and *prosperity for all* flourish – then yes, we will certainly defend it out of our own interest. The homeland of today may be defended by those who feel satisfied and at home in it.

Proletarians, soldiers! When once again you are called by the hundreds of thousands to fight behind a coloured rag against a "foreign" enemy, armed to the teeth and equipped with *live bullets,* remember that you have your *own* enemy and oppressor within the country itself, who bleeds you dry and oppresses you much worse. The internal enemy is the owning class that rules over you.

Remember that it is terrible cowardice and not courage to go passively *with weapons in hand* to war, to death, to the slaughter. *Instead of going cowardly to death* – because others want it – *stay boldly alive.* Use your weapons against your oppressors who cannot possibly withstand it. War, human sacrifice, and all misery will then come to an end forever.

Siegfried Nacht

Pacifism

Previously published as Pazifismus *in Der Freie Arbeiter (Wissen und Wollen),* Volume 16, Issue 27, 1923

If you want peace, prepare for war

This militarist motto summarizes the ideology of the believers in the state, who can only conceive of peace as a situation in which the property of its citizens is protected through internally and externally oriented coercion against any attack.

However, this artificially created peace is only a pseudo-peace. In reality it is a ceasefire, as it is upheld by constant readiness for war.

Whoever desires real peace desires first of all the liberation of the individual from coercion and violence and thus places respect for human life above all else.

The desire for peace comes forth naturally in all living beings. Neither religion nor historical experience form the basis of the desire for peace. The need for rest, which manifests itself when the individual's condition of existence is fulfilled, is the principal impulse toward peace. Satisfying one's egoism without hindrance, i.e. to meet one's natural needs without struggle, brings on the desire for total peace.

The history of all peoples and times shows us that the desire for peace cannot be artificially created and that all preaching of "peace on earth" is futile if the causes of war remain. Here, christian and bourgeois pacifism have almost always failed. The pacifism of christian, bourgeois, and also socialist tendencies, expressed in peace demonstrations and other rallies seems downright ridiculous.

The christian church has, for centuries, been unable to refrain from parading the "Son of God" and "bringer of peace" before its faithful flock at certain times. Similarly, the "secular" peace apostles of today also believe that they cannot refrain from summoning their followers and, in part, the rest of humanity to demonstrations for peace from time to time, in order to adopt resolutions and finally demand peace of the present government.

As if a government, which after all can only ever be a class instrument, could ever fulfil demands which would entail abolishing the principle of domination and thereby eliminating class as such. It reveals a complete failure to realise that a classless society is the prerequisite for real peace.

Even shortly before the great genocide of 1914-1918, hundreds of thousands demonstrated against the war, but all apart from a few exceptions, joined in this imperialist enterprise to kill each other for the benefit of a small number of capitalist magnates. Those who previously spoke of eternal peace went and preached the "holy war".

We ask ourselves, what were the causes that led the masses and their leaders to such a radical change of heart? The answer is: they all lived and still live in a world in which there is no peace but war of all against all.

Or is it not war when thousands and thousands of wage slaves perish in the capitalist-economic competition? When the brutal global economy prematurely crushes millions of humans in their prime and steps in a barbaric way over human corpses? When, as a result of economic crises caused by senseless competition, thousands of proletarians struggle with hunger and just as many beings are destroyed? That is war at its worst, where there is no compassion for the weak, where it is said: "those who cannot swim, drown".

This is how it was before the world war, when a mass slaughter was organised in order to distinguish it from the so-called peace. After the war, that state of affairs which is erroneously called peace but which is only another form of war resumed.

And again a new disaster is being prepared. We can already clearly hear the sounds of that overture, which are still all too familiar to us from 1914. Will those apostles of peace fail again as they did before? Or will they also start to understand that there will be no peace in a society where one is the other's mortal enemy?

Those who desire real peace must not shy away from the final consequence – the desire to act. "In the beginning was the deed", says Goethe in *Faust*. All serious friends of peace have to say: we want to begin, and have the desire to act for the peace of humanity.

Thus, fight against domination in every form, fight against the exploitation of humans by other humans. The monster of war, sanctified by tradition, cannot be eliminated by sentimentality but only by vigorous means, such as have been recommended countless times by anarchists. As long as the social institutions of humanity are founded on power and violence, there will be war among humans.

Whoever desires peace desires revolutionary struggle against the causes of war. There is no other consequence.

Pt.

Anarchist Position on War

Since long before the declaration of the Second World War, the most active of our groups and federations have been the victims of such persecution (imprisonment, concentration camps, etc.), that it was impossible for the anarchists, when the declaration of war came, to attempt any widespread concerted action.

Seeking to avoid prison or death, or seeking to hasten the fall of the oppressing powers, some anarchists were led to participate, in an active or passive role, in the war. A few continue even today, after the conflict, to support the democracies under the pretext that the primary task is the reconstruction of society.

The International Anarchist Congress, recognising that individual and mass resistance to war, in all their forms, can create more fruitful possibilities in the future, draws the attention of militants and anarchist organisations to the interest which should be taken, in time of peace, in the study of the problem of non-participation in war, and to formulate, as much on an individual scale as on that of the groups, concrete attitudes in view of such an eventuality. Among the methods of struggle against war which merit the attention of anarchists, one might mention the general strike, sabotage, civil disobedience, certain forms of conscientious objection, etc.

The anarchists must avoid all confusion and declare themselves opposed to all war, however much it may pretend to be a democratic struggle against totalitarianism. They must not let this dissuade them, in the event of war, from continuing their independent struggle, uncompromisingly, with libertarian methods, against all forms of oppression.

Every Heart is a Time Bomb

On the 2nd of January 1996, we paralysed both directions of the Berlin-Wannsee train line. With an act of sabotage, we interfered with the safety technology of the German national railway to feign a malfunction, provoking an emergency stop of the trains. At no time was there any danger to human life or limb.

The intervention forced the trains to travel at walking pace. At the sabotaged location, we put up stop signs from the national railway. A doll with a sign "Every heart is a time bomb! Stop recruitment-deportation trains!" awaited the trains at the sabotaged spot. We suggested the presence of a bomb by putting up explosion warning signs to prevent the passage of trains until the bomb disposal squad had thoroughly examined our recruitment-deportation train blockader-doll. At the moment when the bomb hints turned out to be just hints, it became clear that we meant our slogan literally. Every heart is a time bomb, everyone can choose to become a disruptive factor in the march of the machine. Every courageous man and woman can intervene in intolerable social conditions – so can we.

We sabotaged the train line on the day of the conscription call-ups in order to disrupt its smooth processing and to set a reproducible example against the ongoing

societal militarisation of hearts and minds. We hereby carry on the initiatives of anti-militarists and groups of total objectors, who in the past repeatedly blocked trains filled with recruits and took a stand against militarisation with other spectacular actions.

We are not prepared to stand idly by and watch the increasing criminalisation of total objectors, whose will to resist will be more and more blatantly broken by imprisonment.

If we take a short look back at the development of the military-political processes from 1992 onward, it becomes clear where the nasty journey of battleship Europe could head if we – all of us who are willing – do not somehow capsize the thing.

At least since the beginning of May 1992, the official course for the new German war policy has been set. Generalissimo Klaus Naumann pushed the new course in an aggressive address to commanders in Leipzig. He demanded "hard, combat-oriented training" of soldiers, called them "lazy and whiny" and, referring to the morale of the soldiers, used the phrase "the fish starts to rot from the head down" to insist on a sharpened training of soldiers with regard to their war readiness, i.e. a stronger conditioning and forming of men into soldierly men.

There should be no doubt about the goals of Naumann, an admirer of "Fritz dem Doofen", and a soldier since the age of 19. The man who calls himself a "conscientious offender" wants to build an army capable of war and attack with the explicit involvement of draftees. The practical testing ranges from Cambodia to Somalia to ex-Yugoslavia and will continue beyond. As early as November 1992, he and Rühe, the minister of war, set the defence guidelines for the military sector with the following positions: "Germany is a continental middle power and export-dependent industrial nation. The vital security interests of German policy therefore include unhindered access to markets and raw materials within the framework of a just global economic order." Somalia was only a stopover. Today nobody talks anymore about the absurdity of this blue-helmet mission (and the messes of the Canadian units, for example), since it was only a means to the establishment of a military global police force on the one hand and an advertising opportunity for the hotheads Rühe-Schäuble-Naumann-Kohl and their German favoured interests on the other. Yugoslavia has become the next stop in this disgusting "game". The "German Wehrmacht" is once again allowed to expand against the East, legitimised by a world opinion that – manipulated and resigned by continuous media bombardments – can no longer think of any other solution than the ready-made "peacemaking measures" of military intervention.

Our heart beats for the deserters who have turned their backs on this shitty war across all fronts. When we refer to the "ex-Yugoslavian" deserters, it is not because we believe that they have abandoned their role in the patriarchy by deserting, but as a positive reference point of men who, at some point in their lives, failed to fulfil their duty as soldierly men. Each deserter knowingly or unknowingly challenges the principles of the patriarchal model, a model that assumes warring national structures of domination. Every deserter subverts the entitlement that supposedly justifies a nation's case for defence and whose power of definition relies on language, culture, and appearance. By his actions, every deserter rejects the state's claim of ownership over its servant – man.

In other words, escaping the military meat-grinder and giving oneself more consideration than the constructed national interest contains a hint of radical opposition, and it should be perceived in this way. There have always been men who have refused to participate in patriarchy; it's just that we've generally been as unaware as the deserters themselves.

"They never talked about it, but a few weeks after their first home leave, they buried their uniforms. They never wanted to go back there." A "Serbian" man describes his friends who came back from the front, several of whom did so by escaping. Whatever personal fears and terrible experiences led men not to want to fight their neighbours, not to want to share in victory and in the rape of women, not to want to murder strangers, but to flee: more than 400.000 men and boys deserted across all fronts! More than 400.000 refugees – men, women, young, old – reached "Germany". Every male refugee of military age is to be considered a runaway and deserter.

We demand an unrestricted right to stay for all refugees! 4.000 "German" armed male potential murderers and rapists, and other military personnel help to secure the results of a dirty war and to enforce the new borders. The construction of a society under military control will

result in a militarized society according to the nationalist principles of each country cleansed of "others". Those who cannot or do not want to find their way in such a country should have the right to stay here.

The outcry from the mouths of politicians, military leaders, and business bosses of the Western world in the face of this war is unparalleled hypocrisy because, from the beginning, it was only about how the war would serve their interests. The recognition policy of the "German" government has fuelled and is partly responsible for the conflict between constructed national interests. War profiteers and the German military alike lay in wait to invade as an alliance but with different perspectives. While the war profiteers seek to valorize their investments to satisfy an insatiable greed for profit, Germany fights its way to a seat on the UN Security Council with every dirty trick in the book.

We, the entire Leftover Left or however we define ourselves at the moment, have failed to hurl our opposition against this war and the "German" positions. Now we have another chance to make a mark against the general militarization of society. Let's put the brakes on every train with involuntarily repatriated refugees, let's stop every bus, let's cut the communication lines at the airports, let's not allow the deportation of those who opposed the war with the most normal course of action in the world – fleeing.

In our opinion, the importance of the "ex-Yugoslav" war for the society in which we currently have to live has been largely underestimated. Our hearts and minds are inculcated with the foregone conclusion that conflicts can only be resolved by the means of the strongest, that the strongest dictates the social conditions, and that soldierly men once again have their place in the restructuring of patriarchal domination. The unchallenged value of patriarchal masculinity becomes even stronger. The shaping of men into soldierly men in military structures that want to fight the "unmanly, feminine"

in everyday life, or rather their voluntary formation into mercenary armies, will come to bear even more strongly. A belligerent relationship to other countries or enclosure within the German-European fortress does not remain without effect on one's own social relations and civil life. The militarization of minds also means a higher degree of readiness for violence against "deviations" and leads to solving conflicts more and more violently rather than through mediation.

In our opinion, the war in Yugoslavia was also conducted here. We should not add to our own defeat in terms of our lack of opposition to the "ex-Yugoslav" war now also passively watching the deportations. On the contrary, for us the argument about desertion and total refusal offers the opportunity to return to a basic anti-patriarchal/anti-militarist position against future wars. We do not believe that there could have been a "just" side in the war. We have put our faith in the disarmament of all military brotherhoods, in the subversion of all soldierly male structures.

The question of redefining a combative practice against domination led some of us again and again to demarcate ourselves from militarism. Today, we ask ourselves how the criteria for an anti-patriarchal combativeness and a social man could grow out of the demarcation from militaristic principles and soldierly virtues. Anti-patriarchal combativeness of men – according to one of our theses – would have to be aimed at disarming the institutionalized and rampant brotherhoods and gangs. The goal is not to gain power over them but to dismantle domination. Anti-patriarchal violence has the aim of splitting apart and subverting the male structures and patriarchal values, of weakening military strength without creating a new army in itself, of spiritual as well as material disempowerment and disarmament. This is the theory.

The discussion about the redefinition of a combativeness with an anti-patriarchal orientation and new social roles cannot be led or carried by us alone. This is also true for the question of what a social man could mean. We would like to have a discussion about this with all the still-existing radical oppositional, egalitarian-oriented groups and people. Our aim is to understand the social process of national-chauvinist mobilization and German favoured interests, to trace the internal and external formation of male power, to make the conditioning of boys and men clear against the backdrop of the current patriarchal rollback, to look for points of blockade and sabotage, and to intervene in social contradictions. The following questions will guide us in the discussion: how can we now hold counter positions when wars are pacified with even more military, when refugees are sent back into a militarized society and are categorized into national identities under close guard of the military? At what points can we attack and poke holes in German-European unification and fortress pol-

itics? How can we develop a utopia against the social collapse that opposes, with a vibrant position, the interests of "German" militarization and formation, and that can form the basis of resistance?

Because the militarization of minds and hearts is the preparation for future wars, we have to look for concepts against militarization, against the conditioning of soldierly men and their voluntary formation if we want to sabotage future wars at the source. For our own sake!

No peace with patriarchy!

Every heart is a time bomb – let's become sand in the gears of power!
Stop deportation-recruitment trains!
Total refusal against the Brotherhood!
Disarm all patriarchal brotherhoods and gangs!
Let's drill holes in Fortress Europe – flood it!
Let's sabotage and block the making of men!
Social men instead of soldierly tanks!
Live radically anti-patriarchal!
For a society without (deportation) prisons!
Solidarity with the deserters!
Let's support (total) objecting Turkish-Kurdish men!

Flaming hearts and Friends

Interruptions

Previously published as the introduction to the brochure
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The enclosure of our social relations by digital technology touches on the substance of life itself. We have to stop thinking of digital devices as prostheses that add an extra level to our reality and which we somehow keep under control by opting in or out of 'consensual contracts'. Tweaking privacy settings, anonymisation and encryption can be good practices when faced with exploitative and oppressive systems; being transparent to those that seek to dominate us is self-destructive. But freedom is more than an individual choice, it is a social relation.

Technology is never neutral, it is always entangled with the existing power structures. The digital environment produces incentives towards certain behaviour. Behavioural design becomes societal design. It's surprising to see how many people adhere in one form or another to the liberal cliché that we are autonomous people who can set their own objectives and make use of any available instrument to get there. Undeniably, we live in a reality that is constantly being shaped by others, by processes that escape us, that we don't see or understand. Digital reality is apt at capturing our time and attention – the prerequisite for the manipulation of our minds and desires. Add to that personal data tracking and user profiling and 'personal choice' becomes a relative concept.

Of course, to dwell in powerlessness is not the answer, but to speak meaningfully of autonomy and freedom in the current conditions means to act against the dominant tendencies in this society. It means to intervene against social relations of exploitation and surveillance. It means to struggle against the digital capture of life.

One side is to resist the digital invasion in our lives, in our relationships, even if we cannot avoid it completely because we don't live outside society. It puts us in the awkward position of limiting our use of digital technology as much as possible while having the specific knowledge and experience to use that same technology as opaquely as necessary. Schizophrenia is, after all, part of the reality of living under capitalism.

Another side is to sabotage the infrastructure that makes this society possible. At the moment, under the banner of 5G, more fibre cables, antennas, routers and servers are installed to weave a more dense web. This upgrade of the internet infrastructure will multiply connected devices everywhere around us. Cables running under the paving stones, cabinets sitting on the street corners, antennas looking down on us from the rooftops and hills – all within reach of our restless hands.

We can interrupt the data flows that facilitate and enhance our exploitation and surveillance.

A New Day in Freedom. Greetings, Year 6

My dear and loved ones,

My heart jumps of joy while writing you these lines. Finally! It feels good to "talk" with you. With a bag full of new experiences that life handed to me, now a year later I return to that clearing, from where I spoke to you the previous time. So much has happened, and yet so little took place...

Every morning when I wake up images from my nightly dreams appear another time in my mind. And then each time (and I mean really each time) I can see you; in these dreams we mostly find ourselves in some newly squatted house with very primitive facilities. And often it is the case that I go around in this seemingly unlimited building and explore new spaces and floors. In the meantime you are sitting in bigger and smaller groups, spread over this great labyrinth. That is how it occurs that every now and then I run into familiar faces, that are happy to finally, after all them years, see me again. And then, after an emotional embrace, immediately I am part again of you and the conversations and discussions continue as excitedly as they did before.

Unfortunately such a mental re-encounter is not the nightly norm; often I remain in the role of an observer and wander around, more like a ghost, watching you and your lives. An incredibly beautiful and at the same time deeply hurtful feeling. Together and still separated at the same time...

However, when I rub the sleep out of my eyes and get up a new day in freedom awaits me. A day in freedom that started with you in my thoughts. With conviction therefore I can say that I am doing well! My inner and outer reality is in constant development and there is still plenty to learn and explore. And as long as this positive feeling that I experience when getting up, overweighs the often hurtful feeling while waking up, my journey on the run remains a dignified travel.

I embrace you out there – you that energetically fight against the horrors of this authoritarian order in your entirely own individual way. Free from the illusion that behind a dialogue with repressive structures some kind of vague idea of freedom could be waiting.

I embrace you in there – you that are amidst grey concrete each and every day exposed to the revenge of "equalizing justice". Holding onto your dignity looking towards the horizon and simultaneously deeply rooted in yourselves – stay strong! And also, and especially here; free from the illusion that behind a dialogue with repressive structures some kind of vague idea of freedom could be waiting.

And I embrace you in between – you that travels around or stands still to flee the persistent searchlights that attempt to make an end to your wild journey. Each and every day in freedom is a day won!

I am excited about the next 6 years. Thank you for being there. So am I.

Again and always
With love and see you again
Your friend and comrade from nowhere

July 10th, 2022